

Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood

Kentucky Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant Sustainability Plan

INTERIM REPORT

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1. Introduction

In December 2013, Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood was awarded a four-year, \$44.3 million Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant to ensure more high-needs children had access to high quality early care and education. The federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge was created to support states in their systemic efforts to align, coordinate, and improve the quality of existing early learning and development programs across funding streams to support children from birth through age five.

As this grant is concluding,¹ Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood has contracted with an independent consulting firm, Compass Evaluation and Research, to facilitate and coordinate a validation study of the All STARS initiative. One aspect of this study is sustainability planning to ensure the work of the RTT-ELC grant continues and expands. Ms. Kate Irish is working with Compass Evaluation and Research to complete activities to inform sustainability planning.

Interim Report Purpose and Format

The purpose of this Interim Report is to provide a summary of data collected thus far (January – June 2018) for key stakeholders to review, react to and utilize for further strategic planning. This report will provide information on the impact of the RTT-ELC projects, findings from surveys and interviews and identified challenges and opportunities. Key information will be incorporated from the Validation Study as it is available throughout the summer and fall. The next steps will include stakeholders/stakeholder groups guiding the development of final sustainability recommendations with action steps.

Methods and Approach

The primary methods and approach for the

Figure 1. Sustainability Project Methods and Approach (January-June 2018)

Stakeholder groups and partners	Through group meetings, individual meetings, interviews and surveys, stakeholders included: state agency staff, Early Childhood Advisory Council members (ECAC) subcommittee members, Child Care Aware, Regional Training Centers, Community Early Childhood Councils (CECCs), Head Start, teachers, directors, parents, principals.
Interviews	35 in-depth interviews were conducted with questions focusing on specific content areas related to sustainability, All STARS, blended models, data and highly vulnerable populations.
Surveys	5 surveys were developed and conducted: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• RTT-ELC Stakeholder Survey – 248 responses (ECAC members and CECC members)• Born Learning Site and Parent Surveys – 107 respondents (Parents and Born Learning Site Coordinators)• All STARS Site Survey – 53 respondents (Preschool Coordinators and Head Start Directors)• Leadership Academy Survey – 97 respondents (Teachers, directors, administrators)
Document review	Variety of documents were reviewed including RTT-ELC reporting documents, Program standards, program evaluation reports, State reports and studies (Cost of Quality Study), etc.
National Advisory Panel	National Advisory Panel review and guidance. Panel members: Anne Mitchell, Early Childhood Policy Research Gerry Cobb, Pritzker Children's Initiative Kelly Maxwell, Child Trends Louise Stoney, Opportunities Exchange

¹ Kentucky received a No Cost Extension for its RTT-ELC which extended Projects 1, 2 and 4 through December 31, 2018.

sustainability aspect of the project are presented in Figure 1. The foundation of the sustainability planning process has been stakeholder engagement and input to ensure the final sustainability plan has statewide buy-in and is aligned with the ongoing work and direction of the early childhood system. The sustainability planning efforts have employed four main methods: stakeholder input, supportive data collections, coordinated knowledge management, and an expert National Advisory Panel review.

Stakeholder Input and Planning

The sustainability planning process has been conducted through coordinated and facilitated input from key stakeholders, including state and local representatives from partner agencies. Existing subcommittees and members of the Early Childhood Advisory Council were engaged to align sustainability work with ongoing efforts and to avoid duplication. Stakeholders provided a vision for sustainability, described project results and identified challenges and opportunities.

Coordination with Validation Study

While the sustainability planning process for the RTT-ELC has been underway, the All STARS Validation Study has occurred simultaneously and the two projects have benefited from coordination and information sharing. The validation study is collecting in-depth data through onsite data collection from a stratified random sample of approximately 300 early care and education facilities across the state, including preschools, Head Start sites and private child care sites. As the largest project of the RTT-ELC, the sustainability planning efforts have had an emphasis on the All STARS project and will be informed by data collected through the Validation Study. The primary instruments used for data collection in the validation project are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Validation Study Instruments (August 2017-September 2018)

Classroom observations	Environment Rating Scale series (inclusive of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale—3, Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale—R, Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale—R, Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, and the School Age Care Environment Rating Scale). When applicable, the Special Link Inclusion Scale, intended for use in inclusive classroom settings.
Surveys	In all sampled sites and classrooms, the Family Provider Teacher Relationship Quality survey, which assesses the quality of parent, site, and teacher communication and engagement. A “universal” survey was made available for the duration of the study to any early educator in the state and was designed to capture general feedback on All STARS. This survey still is in progress with additional findings expected through August 2018.
Questionnaires	Site, teacher, and parent questionnaires designed for the current study.
Interviews	Interviews with staff and stakeholders from the Kentucky Governor’s Office of Early Childhood, Cabinet for Health and Family Services Division of Child Care, Kentucky Department of Education, and Child Care Resource & Referral agencies.

2. RTT-ELC Impact

Kentucky's Early Learning Challenge Grant was developed to build upon the ongoing work of the Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood (GOEC), Cabinet for Health and Family Services Division of Child Care, Kentucky Department of Education and the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). The RTT-ELC focused on three overarching strategies:

1. Improve the quality of all early care and education programs,
2. Engage families as their child's first and most important teacher, and
3. Enhance Kentucky's ability to measure the impact of its work by improved data collection and integration.

These 3 main strategies were implemented through 7 projects: (1) Grants Management; (2) Redesign the tiered quality rating and improvement system; (3) Integrate early childhood standards; (4) United Way Born Learning Academies; (5) Kentucky Strengthening Families; (6) Responsive Professional Development; and (7) Integrate data into the Kentucky Longitudinal Data System. Figure 3 presents key projects, project descriptions, and budgets (for entire grant period).

Figure 3. Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Project Expenditures

Strategy 1: Improving the quality of all early care and education programs	
All Stars: Redesigning the tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS).	\$ 35,269,314
Early Childhood Standards: Integrate Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards in all early learning and development programs.	\$ 49,615
Professional Development: Develop a responsive system of professional development and create a unified registry.	\$1,766,127
Strategy 2: Engaging families as a child's first and most important teacher	
Born Learning: Expand Born Learning Academies through Family Resource and Youth Service Centers.	\$1,247,282
Strengthening Families: Implement the Kentucky Strengthening Families Framework across the Commonwealth.	\$14,992
Strategy 3: Enhancing Kentucky's ability to measure impact through improved data collection and integration	
Data Integration - Integrate all early childhood data into Kentucky's Longitudinal Data System to create a birth to workforce data system.	\$ 1,000,153
TOTAL	\$44,348,482

Note: Project 1: Grants Management Total Budget: \$5,000,999

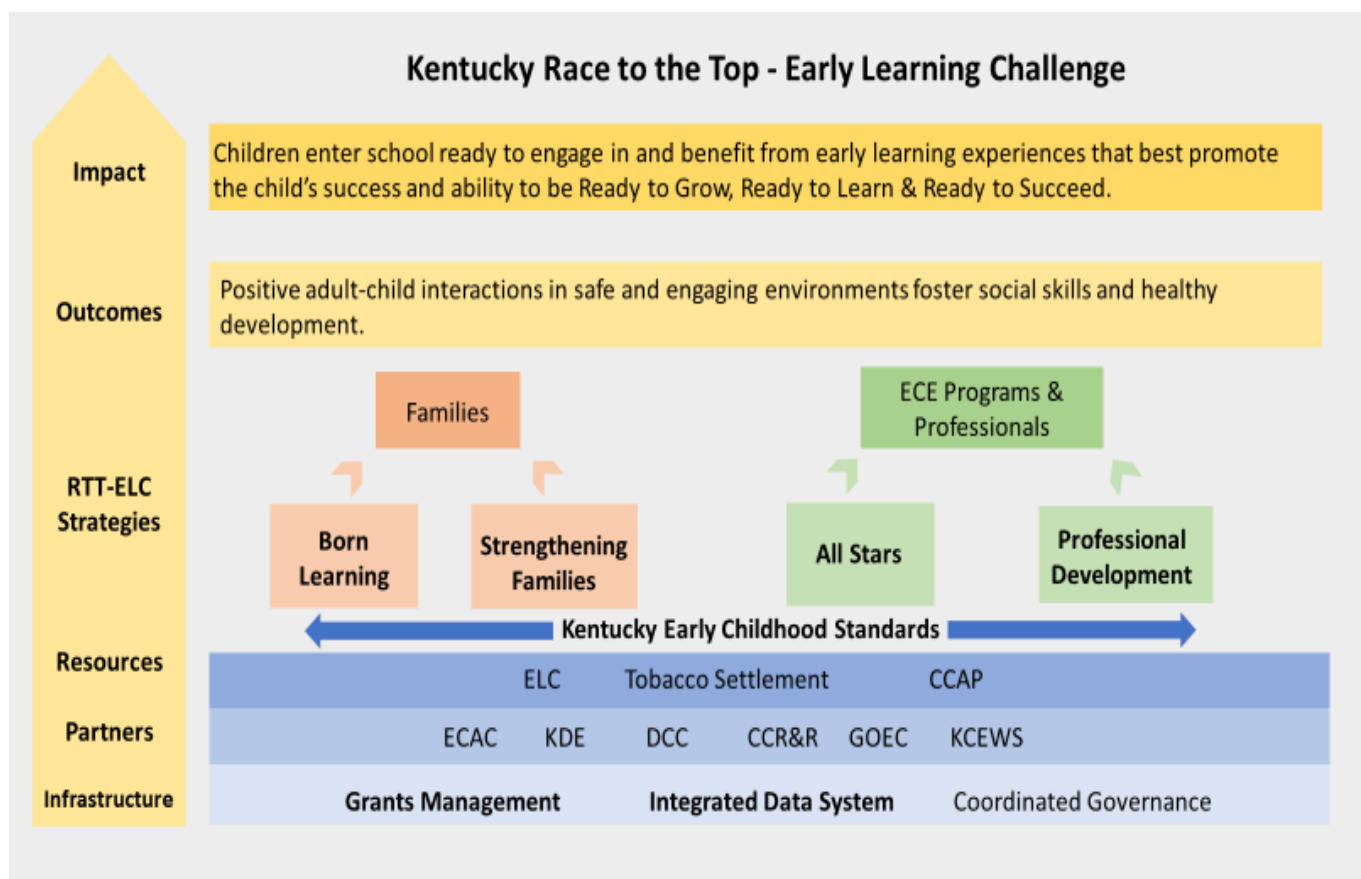
RTT-ELC and Kentucky's Early Childhood System

The RTT-ELC grant supports coordination, alignment and quality improvement of existing programs and funding streams. Kentucky's RTT-ELC required a great deal of collaboration, communication and

participation of all parts of the early childhood system. Figure 4 presents a visual model for the RTT-ELC and its projects as part of the larger early childhood system, along with projected outcomes and impact.

The RTT-ELC was supported through existing Coordinated Governance (ECAC) and grant infrastructure of Grants Management and an Integrated Data System. Key state partner agencies, Governor’s Office of Early Childhood, Kentucky Department of Education and Cabinet for Health and Family Services Division of Child Care, worked together to develop and implement the grant. RTT-ELC funds were blended or complemented with other state and federal funds such as the Tobacco Settlement. The projects of the grant focused on families and early education programs and professionals in order to promote the positive and enriching adult-child interactions in safe and healthy environments that are necessary to have the long-term impact of school readiness.

Figure 4. Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Project Model



Project Highlights

The sustainability activities conducted so far include the compilation of data about each project's outcomes or results. Figure 5 provides an overview of **key** project successes—informed by interviews with state staff and stakeholders as well as document review and data collections.

Figure 5. Key Project Successes

Project	Key Successes
1. Grants Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTT-ELC administrative oversight including monitoring, monthly reporting, budget amendments, sustainability plan. Successfully completed corrective action plan. • All STARS: Coordination and convening of partners; communications and marketing; validation study. • School Readiness Summits – 46 teams participated in Summits and developed Action Plans; qualifying teams received Quality Improvement Grants and Quality Incentive Kits
2. All STARS	<p>Redesign and Development of All STARS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign of Kentucky's Tiered Quality Rating System (TQRIS) – All STARS developed as a five-star hybrid block and points rating system based on Kentucky Early Childhood Standards and domains of early education. • Unified All STARS standards for all early care and education programs that receive public funding including child care centers, Head Start and public preschool. <p>Transitioning and Supporting Sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,170 child care sites (58.8%) were enrolled in All STARS at a level 2-5 as of April 2018. • 447 public preschool sites (88.5%) were enrolled in All STARS at a 4- or 5-star level as of June 2018. • 177 licensed Head Start sites (93.2%) were enrolled in All STARS at a level 2-5 as of April 2018. <p>Classroom Materials, Professional Development and Technical assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,663 child care providers received classroom materials and technical assistance. • Over the course of one year, the training consortium served 4,411 child care staff through 461 no-cost training sessions. • 364 curriculum and assessment tools and 371 screening tools distributed • 2,474 early childhood classroom kits distributed (ex./Science-Nature, Math-Manipulatives, Language-Literacy). • Public Preschool Training and Early Learning Kits – 1,097 staff trained in Dramatic Play, 1,014 staff trained in Block Play, 988 staff trained in Visual/Performing Arts, and 205 staff trained in Kentucky's Initiative in Social Emotional Development.
3. Early Childhood Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online trainings developed and launched at no cost to early care providers. • Trainings offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ KY Strengthening Families: 477 participants ○ Building Blocks of Early Math: 365 participants ○ Increase Family Engagement and Improve Your All STARS Rating: 330 participants

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An introduction to the KY Early Childhood Standards: 81 participants ○ Kentucky Early Childhood Standards 102: 239 participants
4. Born Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150 Born Learning Academies in 81 counties through the RTT-ELC • 5 existing Academies were funded to continue beyond the initial 2-year period • 10 Born Learning Communities were funded to offer community based sessions in sites such as a library, apartment complex or housing authority
5. Strengthening Families	<p>Kentucky Strengthening Families (KYSF) Trainings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 4,500 participants trained on KYSF Overview • All STARS and KYSF Crosswalk online module • Trained 10 Master KYSF Overview Trainers who can offer their own Training of Trainers <p>Parent Cafes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48 mini grants awarded to communities • 270 Parent Café Hosts/Facilitators trained • Over 1,000 Parent Café participants
6. Professional Development	<p>Professional Development Subcommittee of ECAC coordinated and collaborated across RTT-ELC projects to strengthen and support professional development strategies.</p> <p>Kentucky Super Star Leadership Academies (KSSLA) established two leadership cohorts in 2017 with a total of 228 participants from child care, public preschool and Head Start.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 88% of respondents reported a change in their practice • 53% of respondents reported a change in organizational practice <p>ECE-TRIS Unified Registry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of 2017, ECE-TRIS expanded by 91% with 6,669 distinct people being assigned credit within the system and 325% growth of credits assigned (122,301 duplicated credit records).
7. Integrated early childhood data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of early childhood data into Kentucky's Longitudinal Data System from Head Start grantees, HANDS, First Steps Early Intervention data, Born Learning Academy, FRYSC, DCC KICCS (Kentucky Integrated Child Care System-in progress) and ECE-TRIS (in progress). • Early childhood profiles – interactive data report with early childhood data by county and state.

RTT-ELC – Overall Impact

This section of the report presents interim findings regarding the project’s **overall results**. Additional results are presented in upcoming sections.

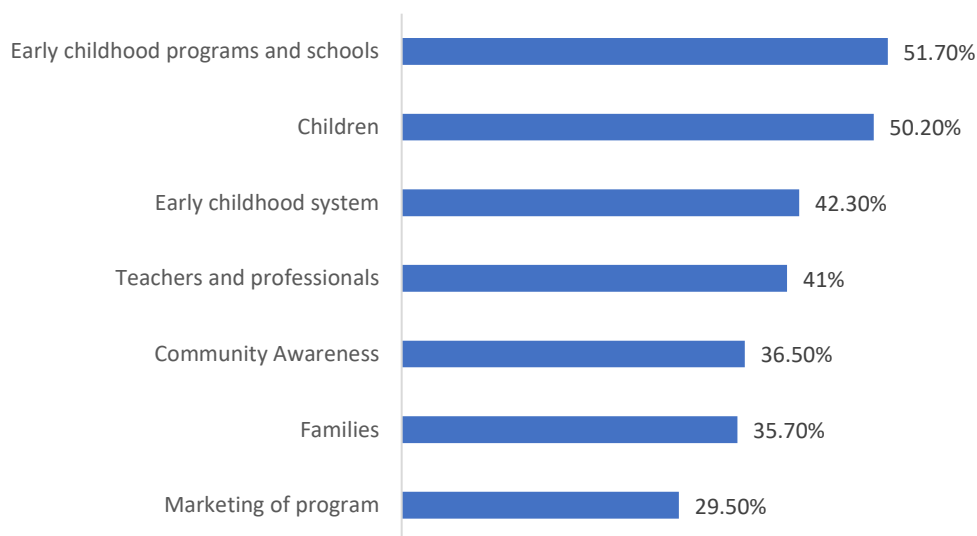
Stakeholder Survey Findings

State and local stakeholders were asked a series of questions about the impact and results of the RTT-ELC, including all of its 7 projects. Stakeholders rated the overall impact of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge a **6.4 out of 10** on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being no impact and 10 being strong impact.



In addition, stakeholders rated the impact of the RTT-ELC for the early childhood system, early education programs, teachers and professionals, children and families and community awareness and marketing of the program. Just over half of respondents reported a **strong or very strong impact** of the grant for early childhood programs and schools and children. Figure 6, below, shows the results. Interestingly, large proportions of respondents (67% or higher) did not report that the RTT-ELC grant has had strong impacts in any of the identified areas. The areas that respondents reported to be the least impacted were community awareness, families, and program marketing—however, this is consistent with the relative value of RTT-ELC expenditures (which focused on improving and sustaining the quality of early care and education programs).

Figure 6. Stakeholder ratings of ‘Strong or Very Strong Impact’ of the RTT-ELC for system elements



Challenges:

Stakeholders identified challenges with the RTT-ELC grant related to the start-up of the grant with a slow initial start followed by a faster pace toward the end. In addition, **state-level collaboration and communication across systems** was identified as an area where further progress is needed.

Stakeholders noted **increased community awareness** efforts around All STARS are needed particularly targeting families. Survey respondents also reported **underserved populations** as a concern for this work moving forward.

“The entire system has a challenge to merge in an organized way what is truly 3 separate systems. Public Preschool, Head start and Childcare. This will continue to be a great challenge. In our county data now available (which wasn't there previously) shows that there are still many "gaps" in the level of quality of the programs in existence..... not to mention the high percentages of children in no program at all. This represents an ongoing challenge that will need to be addressed.” – Stakeholder Survey Response

All STARS Impact

As the majority of the RTT-ELC grant funding (93%) supported the redesign and expansion of the TQRIS, a focus in the sustainability planning process has been directed towards All STARS in surveys, interviews and stakeholder meetings. Additional data is being collected through the All STARS Validation Study.

All STARS Universal Survey Findings

The Universal Survey is available to all early educators in the state; it is a voluntary survey wherein respondents can report on All STARS strengths, results, and challenges². Of the current respondents³, nearly three-quarters of Directors or Administrators (73.7%) reported feeling that **the state is moving in the right direction with All STARS**. In addition, 71% of the responding Directors and Administrators, to date, reported improving their site's All STARS rating within the past year. Fifty-six percent reported that they will try to try to improve their site's star rating within the next year.

Sample statements from Directors and Administrators, in response to the question “In your opinion, what are the best things about All STARS?”

Continuity of the process and making sure that students receive excellent instruction.

The incentives that we received to bring the centers up to date. When you are a small center there

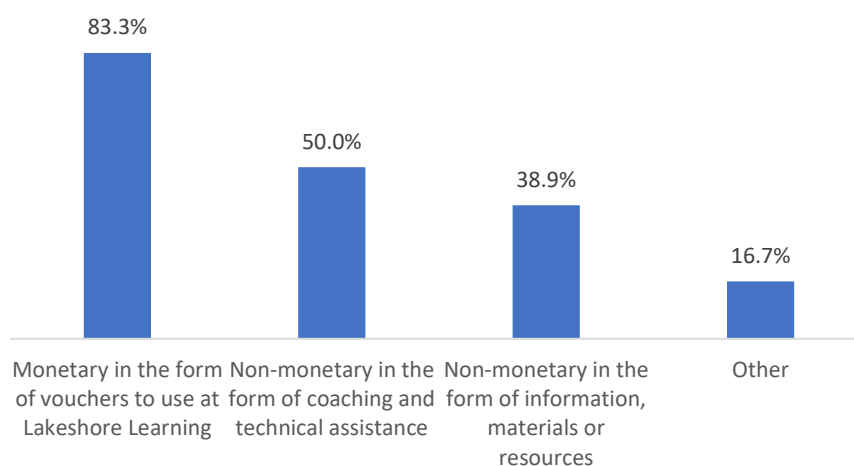
² The universal and related validation study surveys will be available throughout the data collection period for the validation study (fall 2017 through summer 2018).

³ As of June 7, 2018, there were 100 responses, primarily from Directors, Owners or Administrators (85%). Of these, 98% of respondents reported that they are current participants in All STARS.

Directors and administrators were asked to rank the helpfulness of different All STARS resources and materials for improving site or classroom quality. Responses to date indicate:

- Monetary support (in the form of vouchers to use at Lakeshore Learning) is the most helpful form of support (cited by 83% of Directors and Administrators).
- As for non-monetary supports, coaching and technical assistance was cited by 50% of Directors and Administrators as being helpful, followed by information, materials, and resources, which was cited by 39% of Directors and Administrators. Seventeen percent of respondents indicated other forms of assistance also were helpful, such as curricula or staff trainings.

Figure 7. Resources Most Helpful to Improving Quality



Directors and Administrators who have responded to the Universal Survey, to date, also identified the operational factors that were challenging for them, in creating and maintaining high quality early learning environments. To date, some of the most challenging factors are:

- The expense of making improvements (61% of 74 respondents)
- Finding and hiring qualified staff (57%)
- Retaining qualified staff (55%)

These and other factors will be more fully explored as data collections are completed, summer 2018.

Super Stars Leadership Academy Survey Findings

Teachers and Administrators who participated in the Super Stars Leadership Academy rated the overall impact of All STARS on their site or classroom as a **9 out of 10** with 10 being strong impact.⁴ When asked to what extent All STARS lead to significant impacts, nearly three-quarters of teachers and administrators rated a 'Strong or Very Strong Impact' for Teachers and Professionals, Children, Early

⁴ Teachers and administrators who received the survey had participated in the Super Stars Leadership Academy. As of June 2018, there were 97 responses.

childhood system, and early childhood programs and schools. In contrast, about half of respondents reported a strong or very strong impact of All STARS for families. Other survey and interview data support the idea that further engagement and outreach to families about All STARS is needed.

When asked how else All STARS could be supporting their site, they identified:

- Continued and ongoing professional development,
- Additional investments for quality teaching staff and classroom materials,
- More specific feedback on rating visits and ERS.

“The ALL STARS (TQRIS redesign) has led to increased awareness of the importance of the development of a screening and assessment plan in childcare centers. This has in-turn increased awareness regarding special needs that may be present in the center. However, many of the staff members in these centers are unsure how to act on the information once it is obtained (how to meet the special needs, how to build on current skills children have, etc.).”

3. Findings: Stakeholder Feedback on Sustainability

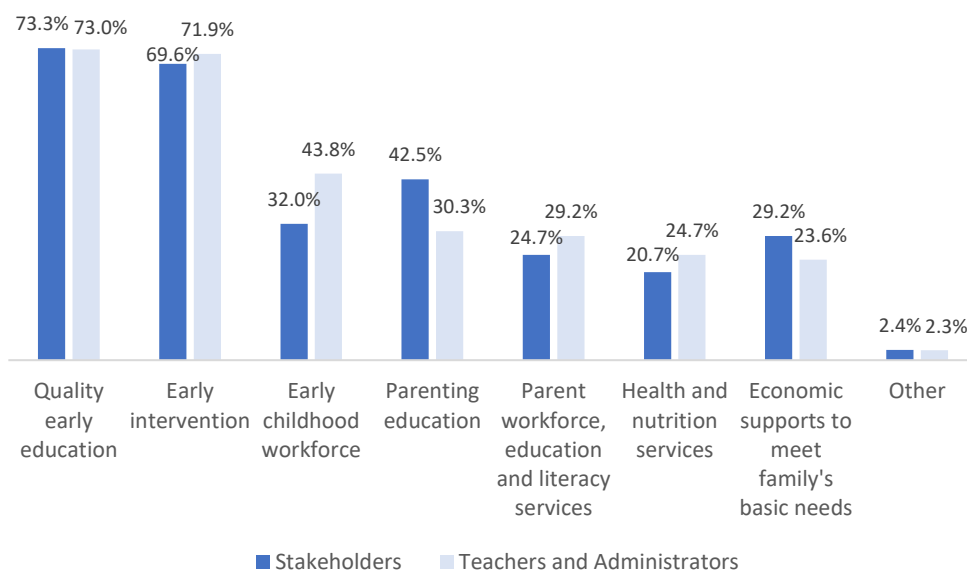
Vision for Early Childhood Education in Kentucky

Quality early education and **early intervention services** were identified by both stakeholders and teachers and administrators as the most critical factor for ensuring positive outcomes for children and families in Kentucky.⁵ Survey respondents identified early childhood workforce services and parenting education as the next most critical services to ensure positive child and family outcomes. Other services included parent workforce, education and literacy services, health and nutrition services and economic supports to meet family’s basic needs. While there was good agreement between stakeholders and teachers and administrators as to the importance of quality early education and early intervention for positive child outcomes, responses differed somewhat as to the importance of services such as ensuring a strong early childhood workforce, parenting education, and other supportive services. For example, teachers and administrators tended to place more importance on the strength of the early childhood workforce, and services that support parents and health or nutrition. Stakeholders, in comparison, placed more importance on parenting education and economic supports for families.

Stakeholders and teachers and administrators tended to agree that quality early education and early intervention services were most critical for ensuring positive child outcomes.

⁵ State and local stakeholders (ECAC and CECC members) were surveyed about their priorities for the early childhood system in Kentucky. Participants from the Super Stars Leadership Academy (Teachers, Child Care Directors and Administrators) were asked the same questions about their vision for early childhood system.

Figure 8. Most critical services for ensuring positive child outcomes⁶



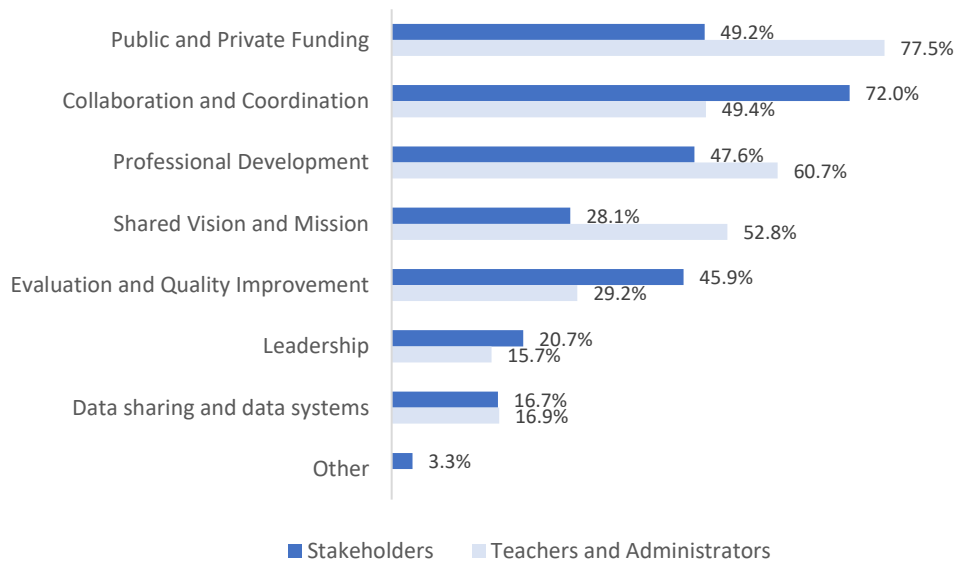
Kentucky's Focus for the Next 5 Years

Stakeholders and teachers and administrators also were asked to identify which early childhood system components Kentucky should focus on in the next 5 years (Figure 9). In contrast to questions about which services were most critical for positive child outcomes, stakeholders and teachers and administrators were more varied in their identification of priorities for the next five years. For example, more than two-thirds of stakeholders (72%), identified 'Collaboration and Coordination' as the key area to focus on followed by Public and Private funding (49.2%), Professional Development (47.6%), Evaluation and quality improvement (45.9%), Shared vision and mission (28.1%), Leadership (20.7%), and Data Sharing and Data Systems (16.7%).

In contrast, for teachers and administrators, priority focus areas were Public and Private Funding (77.5%) and Professional Development (60.7%), followed by Shared Vision and Mission (52.8%), Collaboration and Coordination (49.4%), Evaluation and Quality Improvement (29.2%), Data Sharing and Data Systems (16.9%) and Leadership (15.7%).

⁶ Figure will be updated with findings from the Validation Study surveys as they become available.

Figure 9. Priority focus areas for the next 5 years⁷



Underserved populations

Families with mental health or substance abuse issue were identified by just over 60% of stakeholders and teachers and administrators as a group that does not currently get enough attention or needs more investment. Similarly, more than half of teachers and administrators identified **children who have had traumatic experiences** as an underserved population. Nearly half of stakeholders (46.9%) reported infants and toddlers (birth-three) needed a greater investment, followed by families living in rural areas (42%), children involved with child welfare or foster care (37.6%), homeless children/families (30.6%), children with special needs (27.4%), Preschool children (25.7%), and children whose home language is not English (19.2%).

Two populations that may need more attention are (a) families with mental health or substance abuse issues and (b) children who have had traumatic experiences. These two populations may be correlated.

Note that while there is good agreement between stakeholders and teachers and administrators as to the importance of serving families with mental health or substance abuse issues, there is more variation as to the importance of serving infants and toddlers, families living in rural areas, children involved with child welfare or foster care, and homeless children and families (all more strongly identified by stakeholders than teachers and administrators). This finding may serve as a point of discussion regarding perceived needs and vulnerabilities among different stakeholder groups (including teachers and administrators).

⁷ Figure will be updated with findings from the Validation Study surveys as they become available.

Figure 10. Who are the underserved populations?⁸

	Stakeholders		Teachers and Administrators	
	#	%	#	%
Families with mental health or substance abuse issues	149	60.8%	54	60.7%
Children who have had traumatic experiences*			49	55.1%
Infants and Toddlers	115	46.9%	11	12.4%
Families living in rural areas	103	42.0%	22	24.7%
Children involved with child welfare/foster care	92	37.6%	25	28.1%
Homeless children/families	75	30.6%	20	22.5%
Children with special needs	67	27.4%	24	27.0%
Preschool children	63	25.7%	22	24.7%
Children whose home language is not English	47	19.2%	17	19.1%
Other	10	4.1%	6	6.7%

*The category of 'children who have traumatic experiences' was added to the Leadership Academy Survey based on sustainability and validation study preliminary findings. This category was not included in the original survey sent out to stakeholders.

Opportunities

Through the sustainability planning process of data collection and review and stakeholder synthesis of the successes, lessons learned, challenges and current context, opportunity areas were identified for further consideration and discussion.

A Focus on Implementation

Coordination and Collaboration at the State Level

Now that the development, start-up and initial implementation phases of All STARS are complete, the focus will be on ongoing implementation and sustainability of the All STARS as a comprehensive and continuous quality improvement system. During the RTT-ELC grant, GOEC served as the coordinator and convener for All STARS by bringing partners together, facilitating cross agency communication and collaboration, working with outside experts and contractors as necessary and monitoring progress against grant goals and deliverables. **More than two-thirds of stakeholders surveyed indicated that 'collaboration and coordination' was a key area of focus for Kentucky over the next five years.** Having a convener and collaborator office or officer once the grant ends will be critical to serving as a liaison with the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC),

A coordinating office or officer is a critical support for ongoing collaboration and coordination.

⁸ Figure will be updated with findings from the Validation Study surveys as they become available.

continue the ongoing work of All STARS as a unified set of standards and foster the cross-agency collaboration necessary to provide a comprehensive TQRIS system.

Ongoing quality improvement: A State level process and structure

In addition to a convener, it will be important to develop a process for All STARS to model continuous quality improvement at the state-level by being able to regularly review, revise, issue guidance and offer support to local entities. All STARS must **continue to be aligned with best practice research** as well as connected to the local needs and issues that arise. Fostering a cross-agency, state-level structure to monitor progress, review current research, make decisions and include feedback loops to stay connected with the field, will provide All STARS the ability to support quality over time within a changing context.

Investing in continuous quality improvement will help the state stay current with best and evidence-based practices for supporting children and families.

Model fidelity and best practices

Classroom instruction, screening and assessment

Research indicates that quality, teacher-child interactions offering developmentally appropriate early learning opportunities are a significant factor in achieving positive child outcomes. The All STARS standards require the use of curricula, screening and assessment tools and the RTT-ELC grant provided many child centers with research-based screening and assessment tools as well as curricula. These tools were paired with professional development training. Survey respondents and interviewees reported that **providing these tools was critical in promoting quality in early learning centers** because they did not have the resources to purchase these items. Being able to provide these materials at no cost to child care programs is an important contributor to meeting the All STARS standards and ensuring quality care.

Free or low-cost materials for early care and education sites facilitates full implementation of All STARS standards.

Intensive Professional Development and Coaching

Quality instruction and interactions are tied with being able to fully implement screenings, assessments and curricula with fidelity. While sites and professionals were offered professional development training, ongoing and intensive support is needed to be able to implement these high-quality practices. **Intensive, onsite coaching models show results in changing teaching practices.**

Intensive and onsite coaching for early educators also facilitates full implementation of All STARS standards.

Teachers and Administrators that participated in the Super Stars Leadership Academy indicated that their most preferred methods of support to improve quality are: Observing others in high quality sites or classrooms (having things modeled) (75.5%), Participating in a professional group made up of their peers (69.8%) and on-site coaching with external consultants/coaches (68.5%). The types of support identified as 'least preferred' by respondents were: Reading or studying materials, online trainings and courses and video clips or tutorials.

Some of the most preferred methods of professional support were also reported to be the least available. Observing others or modeling (35.9%), Professional Learning Communities (25.6%), Conferences (23.1%), Peer learning groups (21.8%) and on site coaching (20.5%) were identified as ‘not available or really hard to find or afford.’ The most frequently identified barriers to accessing the preferred methods of professional support were ‘Cost or affordability’ (73.8%) and ‘Time or substitutes’ so I can attend (67.5%).

Survey respondents reported that their most preferred methods for receiving assistance, coaching, modeling or peer groups, often were not readily available to them.

Figure 11. Preferred and available professional support⁹

	Preferred Method of Professional Support			Availability of Professional Support		
	Least Preferred	Acceptable	Most Preferred	Not Available	Somewhat Available	Very Available
Participating in a professional group made up of my peers in my county or across the state	2.6%	25.6%	69.2%	21.8%	47.4%	26.9%
Observing others in high quality sites or classrooms (having things modeled for me)	5.1%	24.4%	68.0%	35.9%	41.0%	18.0%
On site coaching with external consultants/coaches	5.1%	30.8%	61.5%	20.5%	50.0%	26.9%
Ongoing discussions and trading ideas in Professional Learning Communities	5.1%	42.3%	51.3%	25.6%	53.9%	18.0%
Offsite professional development trainings or classes	6.5%	40.3%	50.7%	10.3%	52.6%	33.3%
Conference presentations or roundtables	6.4%	42.3%	50.0%	23.1%	42.3%	30.8%
Peer learning and supervision from staff in my same school/site	7.7%	38.5%	48.7%	14.3%	42.9%	36.4%
Online trainings and courses	27.6%	43.4%	27.6%	9.1%	29.9%	55.8%
Video clips or tutorials	32.4%	48.7%	17.6%	11.4%	39.2%	44.3%

⁹ Figure will be updated with findings from the Validation Study surveys as they become available.

Reading or study materials on the topic	40.3%	42.9%	15.6%	9.1%	37.7%	50.7%
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Finally, coordinated and/or shared professional development among agencies could offer a strategy to meet the needs of early education staff based on the strengths and resources of each agency partner. (For example, Head Start agencies may be able to provide support for parent, family, and community engagement while preschool sites may be able to share lessons learned and best practices for serving children with special learning or developmental needs.) Teachers and administrators reported that they need more support in the following areas: Supporting positive behavior and addressing challenging behavior (75%), Learning or understanding what's new in the field or in best practices (62.5%), Partnering and Communicating with Families (45%) and Supporting vulnerable populations (47.5%).

Sustaining Quality

The Cost of High Quality Early Education

All STARS provides quality standards and supports, the development of which were financed through the RTT-ELC. With the RTT-ELC ending, one question is how early education programs will be able to sustain their quality and continue to meet the All STARS standards over time. There are two notable challenges for sustained high-quality practices:

- (1) The 2017 Cost of Quality study estimated the costs at different quality levels for the Kentucky Preschool Program and the Child Care Assistance Programs and found that the reimbursement rates for both programs were significantly lower than the cost of care and the disparity is particularly dramatic for infants and toddlers.¹⁰ One of the primary concerns is that early education programs face cost barriers associated with the hiring and retaining of qualified teachers as well as the costs of research-based curricula and classroom materials to ensure a stimulating environment.
- (2) Families experience cost barriers associated with finding and selecting high-quality care—higher quality care is more expensive and many families require subsidies to afford either the market rate or the true cost of care.

Without ensuring the financing early education programs need to support quality services, we are limiting the ability of programs to meet and improve in the All STARS program. Promoting a high quality early education system will require further discussion and consideration of a strategic financing model utilizing state and federal funding opportunities such as the significant increase in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant program.

Fostering and supporting collaboration at the local level

Collaboration at the local level has been a critical strategy to improving quality, supporting professionals, providing early education access to families and fostering community awareness and

¹⁰ Building Blocks: The Kentucky Early Childhood Cost of Quality Study. Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, 2017. <http://prichardcommittee.org/wp-content/uploads/Cost-of-Quality-Brief-November-2017.pdf>

outreach with families. State agency partners must seek to identify the best ways to support and enhance these collaborative strategies through state level policy, guidance and funding.

Community Early Childhood Councils and School Readiness Summits

In some communities, the Community Early Childhood Councils (CECC) have provided key collaborative structures to help support professionals as well as families based on that community's unique needs and contexts. Through the RTT-ELC and GOEC, communities were invited to participate in School Readiness Summits which provided an opportunity for Superintendents and administrators and the early care and education community to collaborate and develop action plans. Qualifying community teams could apply for quality improvement grants and quality incentive kits to support and implement the local action plans. These Summits and grants provided a key support for local communities and CECCs to further their collaboration to connect with the school system and foster school readiness in innovative ways. This type of support for local collaboration could serve as an initial step with follow-up strategies to deepen the collaborations occurring and to meet emerging needs.

Community Early Childhood Councils help foster and support local community support for school readiness.

Blended pre-kindergarten models

Another prevalent way that local communities collaborate to provide services to families is through blended pre-kindergarten models: Private child care, public preschool and Head Start sites partner with one another to offer quality early education to children in their communities. Blended programming may mean different things. For many survey respondents (responding to a survey about their blended model), blending means the integrating of funding sources for children and sharing tangible resources such as buses or learning materials. Less common were collaborating to ensure full-day or full-year services or sharing of administrative staff or personnel.

Blended models leverage resources but there are challenges working across operational models.

Figure 12. Blended program models

Students are funded through multiple funding sources such as Head Start, preschool, child care assistance program or private pay.	86.4%
We share resources such as buses or learning materials.	81.8%
Professional development and training for teachers is shared among program models.	72.7%
We share space in a building with another program model.	63.6%
We share teaching staff with another program model.	63.6%
We collaborate with other programs to make sure services can be full-day or full-year for students.	45.5%
We share administrators, financial or human resources staff.	40.9%
Other	13.6%

Blending allows for the leveraging of resources to efficiently and effectively serve as many children as possible. Further, the unified All STARS standards allow for one set of standards for all programs to adhere to-- but there are many challenges to operating a blended model, with each program having separate state and federal monitoring and additional program standards to meet. Moving forward, it may be helpful for state partners to seek ways to reduce barriers and support these blended models to

ensure services are uniformly high-quality and the number of children served in any of the operational models is maximized.

Data informed programming and decision making

Through project #7, considerable progress was made integrating early childhood data from state agencies into the longitudinal data system. This has enabled the development of meaningful data tools like the interactive early childhood profiles and data analysis using the kindergarten screen and 3rd grade testing results to look at longitudinal data. There is an opportunity to develop an intentional data plan with identified research questions to be able to further enhance the use of data for early childhood program improvement and for informed decision making. The existing Data subcommittee of ECAC could provide the expertise and support to develop a data plan. In addition, further support of local partners through trainings and technical assistance on how to use early childhood data could provide local stakeholders with the tools they need to inform their work at the local level.

A data system is in place, with support from the RTT-ELC. Ongoing planning and support can help ensure data are accessible, meaningful, and useful to different stakeholders, moving forward.

Vulnerable Populations

Through the sustainability and validation studies, barriers to working with vulnerable populations of children and families were identified. Further, 91.3% of teachers and administrators surveyed reported currently working with children who have two or more Adverse Childhood Experiences and 59% indicate that children and families struggling with Adverse Childhood Experiences is a consistent and significant issue for their site. More than half of teachers and administrators report that they are just learning about ACES and there hasn't been a professional development opportunity near them. Throughout the summer, we will continue to collect more data on the early education programs serving children/families with ACEs and what types of supports are available and what are still necessary.

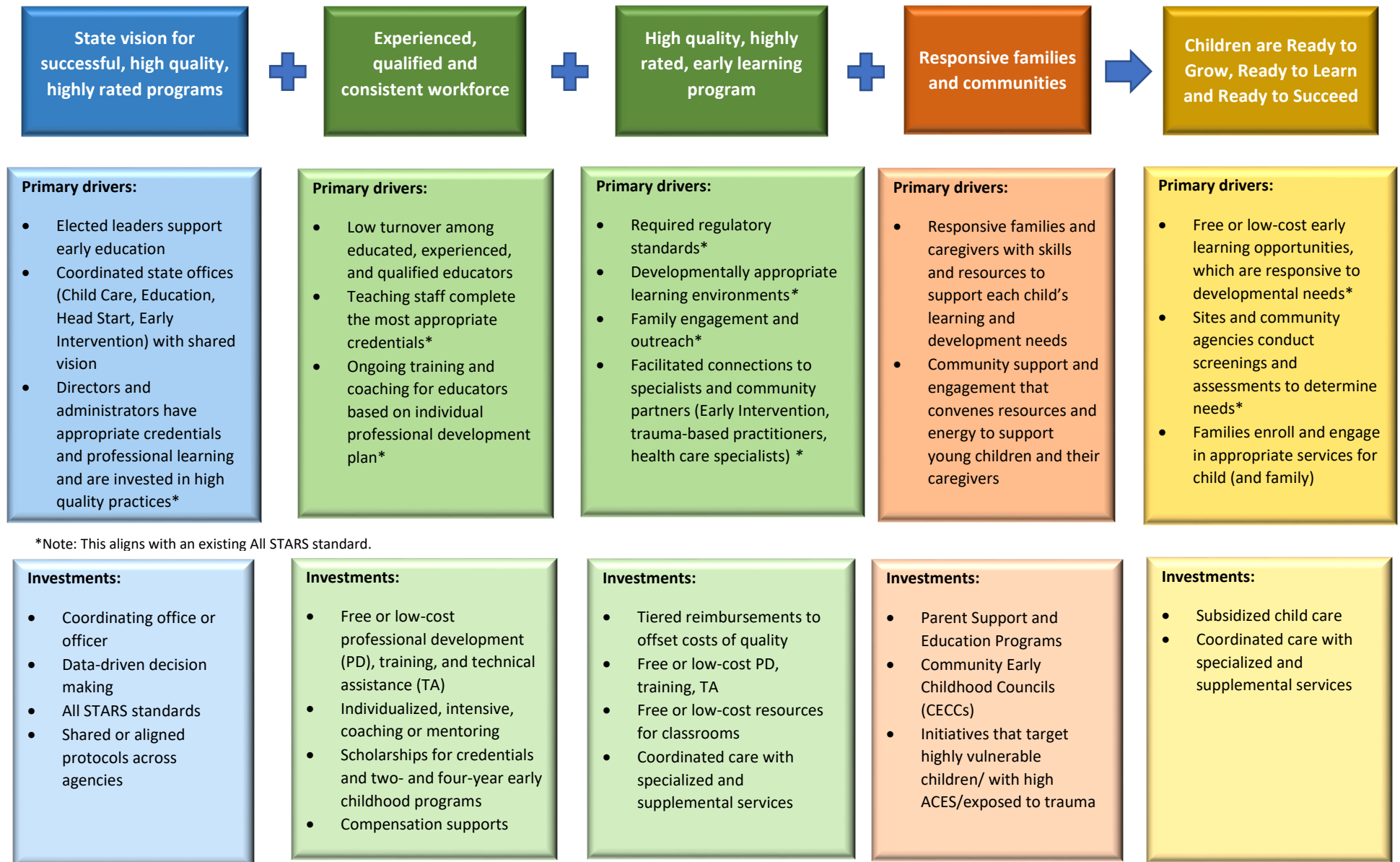
Early educators may need more support in responding to children with Adverse Childhood Experiences.

4. Discussion and Next Steps

All STARS Theory of Change

On the next page is a Theory of Change Vision for All STARS that incorporates lessons learned and vision for the program gained throughout the sustainability planning process. The purpose of the All STARS Theory of Change is for review and discussion to determine if this is the model to use to guide the next steps of implementation and sustainability of All STARS.

All STARS Vision: A comprehensive quality improvement system in which all early learning programs and professionals are encouraged and supported to ensure children are healthy and ready to start school.



*Note: This aligns with an existing All STARS standard.

Sustainability Next Steps

The next step in the sustainability planning process is for key stakeholders and groups (ECAC) to review the interim report and data collected thus far and discuss next steps. The report provides discussion questions for consideration. Based on stakeholder feedback and guidance, sustainability recommendations will be developed. These recommendations will provide the basis for developing action steps with a plan for ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Discussion questions for stakeholders:

1. Is there additional data that we need to collect? What questions still need to be answered?
2. Do you have any feedback on the All STARS Theory of Change?
3. What is your feedback for the system, policy, project and program levels?
 - a. System: What are the implications for the system as a whole? How can existing infrastructure support the outcomes?
 - a. Policy: Are there key policies that either should stay in alignment or be brought into alignment, to facilitate the investments that will drive the desired outcome(s)?
 - b. Project/Program: What questions or recommendations do you have related to specific projects or programs?
 - c. Funding – What are your recommendations related to funding priorities and potential funding opportunities?

Next Steps

In collaboration with key agency staff, recommendations will be developed based on feedback from ECAC and other stakeholders. Sustainability recommendations will align with priority areas and data collected through the sustainability planning process as well as the Validation Study to identify specific strategies for moving forward. Goals and projected outcomes will be identified and the final Sustainability Plan will include monitoring and evaluation strategies to ensure continuous quality improvement.